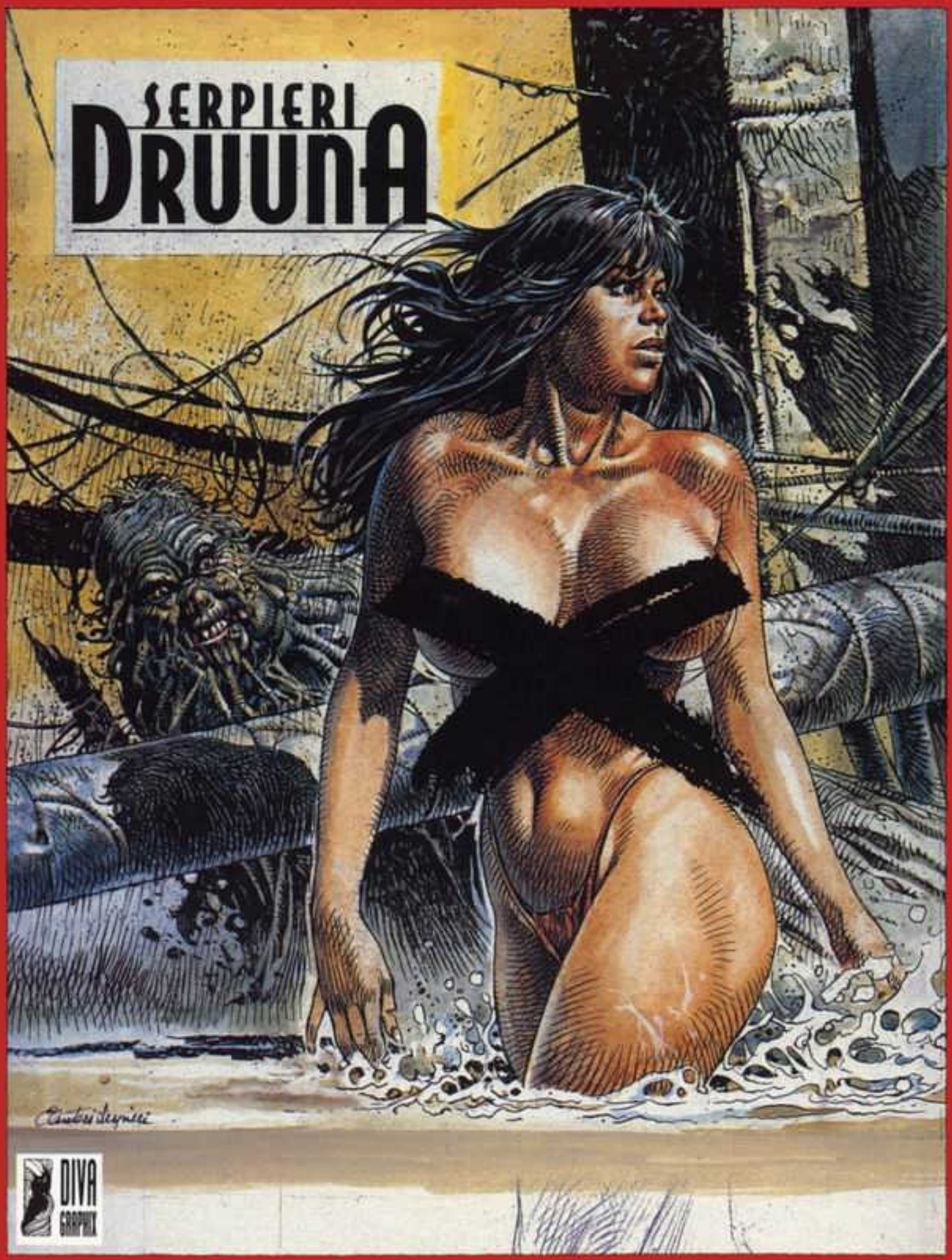
SERPIERI
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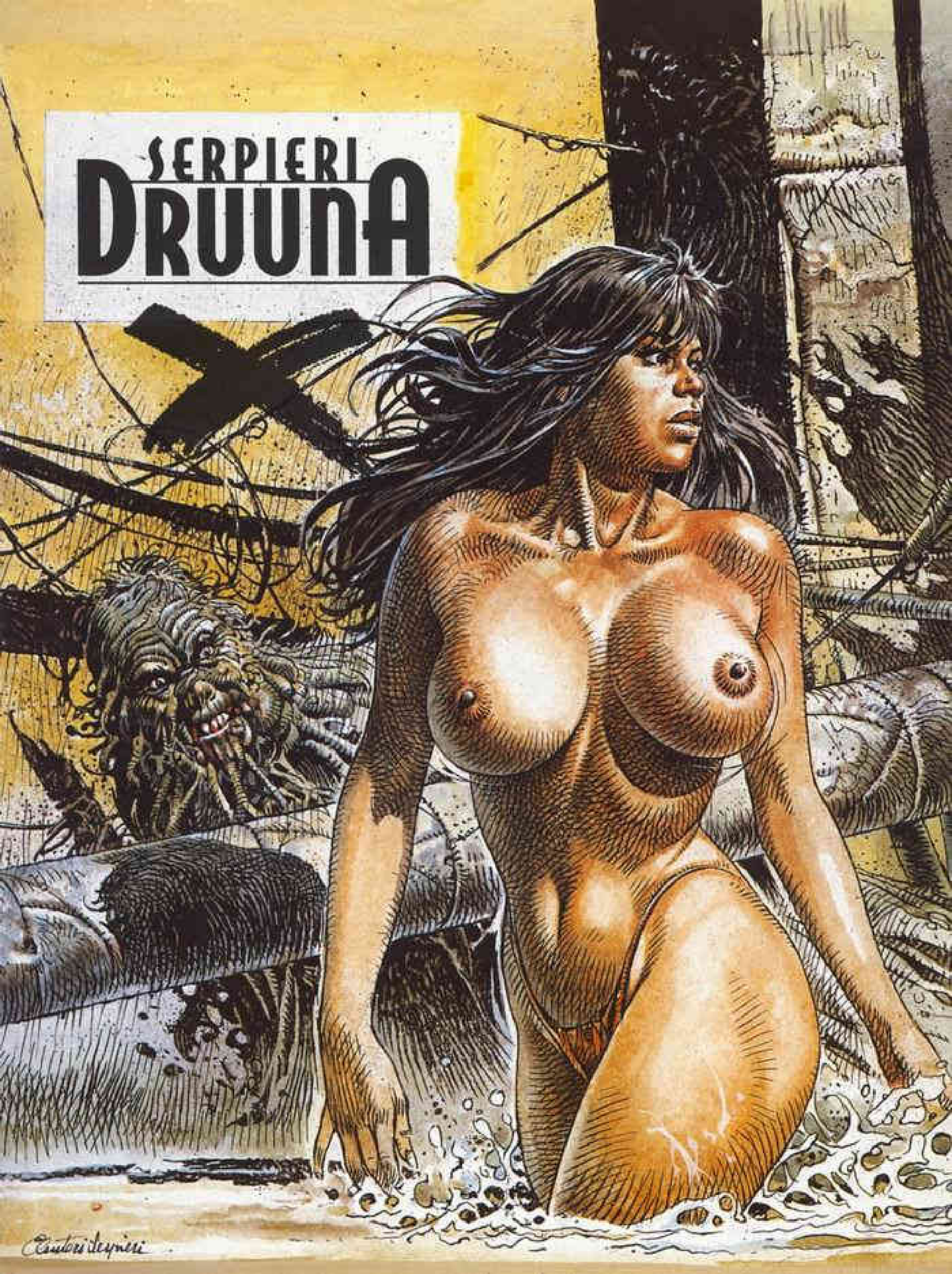

SERPIERI
DRUUNA
X

WHEN I CONCEIVED DRUUNA, SHE was very different from the woman we know today. I had, in fact, wanted to draw a very erotic short story in a highly caricatured style, about a voluptuous, curvaceous woman. That's all. I was at the beach at Ostie, in Italy, one day when it was completely deserted. As I watched, a naked woman splashed out of the waves. Her body glistened with golden droplets that sparkled under the sun... The woman I had been looking for, for so long, was there before me in all her naked splendor... At that precise moment in time, I had no idea that I would create an almost unending saga from that one vision.

A FEW HOURS LATER, THAT SAME day, I saw a film, *La Femme Publique*, with Valerie Kaprisky. A great looking lady (a bit short in the leg and small in the breast, but otherwise really well-built). In one of the scenes, she strolls through the Parisian night, her dark hair billowing in the breeze. The magic moment comes when she is looking at herself in a mirror. She climbs onto a chair and the camera pans around her naked body. She curves her back to push out her butt and her hair falls carelessly around her shoulders. I thought to myself, "That's the kind of woman I like! And that's the kind of woman I 'm going to draw." At that instant, all the comic book heroines flashed through my mind: Barbarella, Valentina, Manara's women, etc. When drawing a woman, one always tries to idealize her, lengthen her legs, make her face prettier, turn her into a Barbie doll. One must draw like that because that' s the way it is in comics. A stereotype has been set and a woman drawn in any other way could be considered ugly or even masculine. I wanted to change all that. Corben, is of course, the exception; he draws women of grotesque proportions, but they end up being sensual. Corben was able to impose this concept and make it acceptable.

I started out with the idea that Druuna would be a secondary character in my story. I wanted the lead to be a man. But when I started drawing the story, Druuna was omnipresent on almost every page and I finally realized that she had upstaged everyone else...She was, in fact, the heroine.

I HAD THE STORY IN MY HEAD AND I owed it to myself to make it a graphic reality... I had done a few sketches, but I must say that I was happiest with the drawings as they turned out in the actual story. Druuna found her graphic identity on about the third or fourth page of *Morbus Gravis*. That is really her! Today, many pages later, her face has become gentler, and even her body has changed. At the beginning of *Morbus Gravis*, Druuna had the body of a Native American. I suppose this comes from the fact that I had drawn a lot of westerns, and I really enjoyed drawing their characteristic faces and Mongolian features: high cheek bones, oblique eyes, and full lips. Druuna' s face changed, almost instinctively, with her first contact with the monk. In one of those images, Druuna is in profile and there, graphically, she is perfect. I wanted to start the story in this anguished world, at a moment typical of everyday life. In the midst of all this Druuna has her own secluded corner where she can close herself off, delve into her books and try to understand. She is sensitive, intelligent, and highly curious.

YES, BUSH.... THAT WAS GREAT, BRAVO. NOW YOU CAN STOP.
AHHH... NO ...WHY? MORE, I WANT MORE!
TAKE YOUR TIME, DEAR. WE NEED SOMEONE LIKE YOU! I AM SO HAPPY WITH YOU.
I AM EX-HAUSTED... YOU GAVE ME THAT DRUG ...BUT I LOVED THIS... I LOVE HAVING SEX... I WILL NEVER FORGET THEM... I WANT MORE... MORE...
ROWRO!
OUGHH!
GALL, MAKE HER FAINT WITH PLEASURE.
OHHHH... AHH... MH...
NOW IT'S BACK TO YOU, BUSH. TAKE HER AS ONLY YOU CAN....
HHHH... HH...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN, WILL. I DON'T UNDERSTAND...BUT I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU SO SAD!
HERE I AM WITH YOU AND I'M THE WOMAN OF YOUR DREAMS, YOU SAID SO YOURSELF...REMEMBER? I LOVE YOU...
I'M TRYING TO UNDERSTAND... IT'S AS IF MY MIND HAD GONE TO SLEEP ...SOMETHING IS KEEPING ME FROM DOING ANYTHING

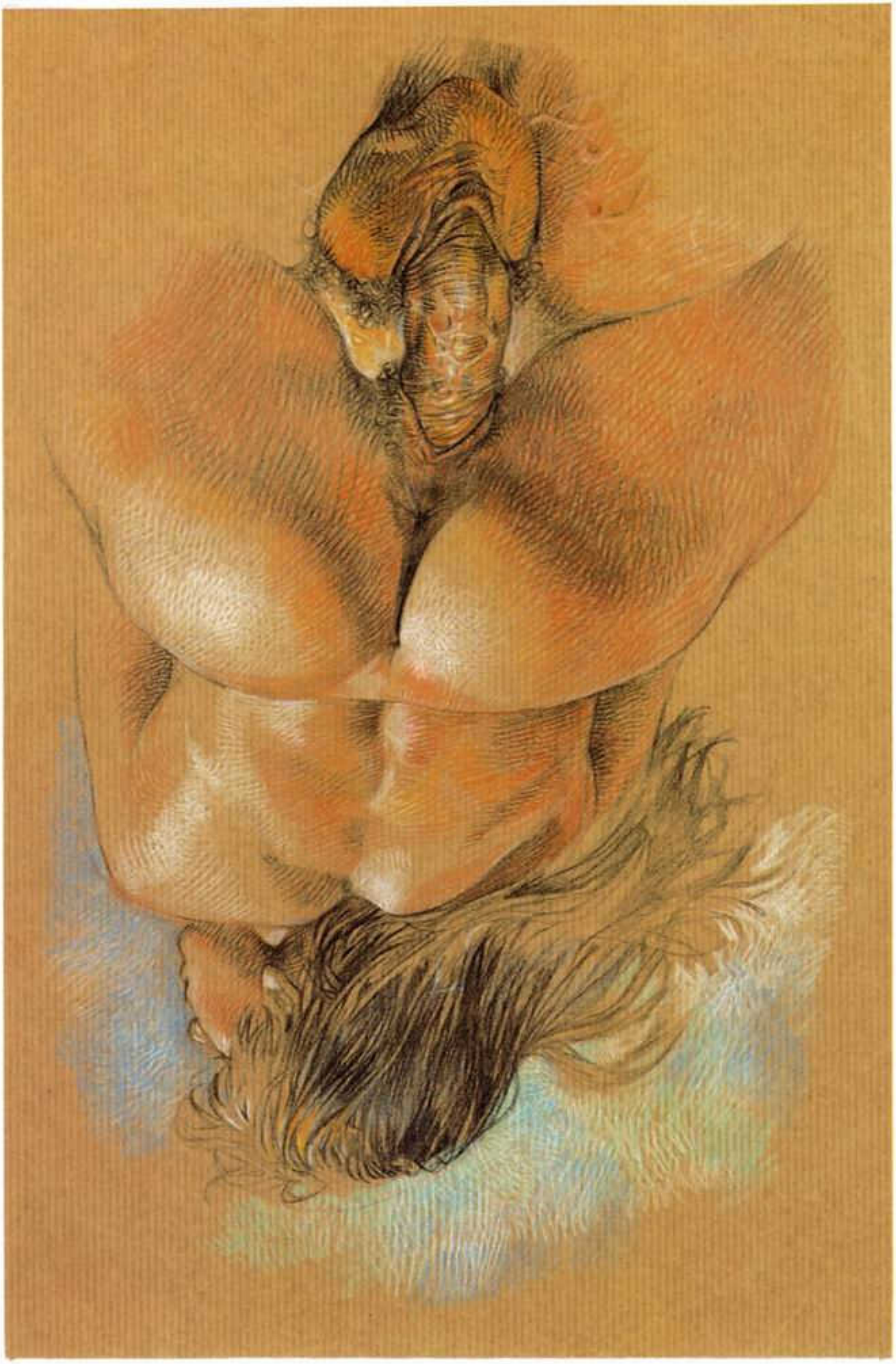
OH, WILL, MAYBE IT'S THE WAY YOU SAY IT IS! I CAN'T EXPLAIN ALL THIS...I WOULD LIKE TO HELP YOU. I REALLY WOULD...
BUT IF YOU COULD SEE INSIDE ME, YOU WOULD SEE HOW COLD I AM...ONLY YOUR HEART CAN GIVE ME WARMTH... YOUR LOVE...YOUR CARESSES...

I'M GOING TO KISS YOU, MY LOVE...I KNOW YOU'LL LIKE IT.
OHHH...DRUUNA ...DRUUNA...
HMMMM... HMMMMM!

A...HHH... HO... HMMM!
...MMMM...

TIME... THERE IS A TIME FOR EVERYTHING. A TIME FOR LOVE...YES, FOR LOVE...

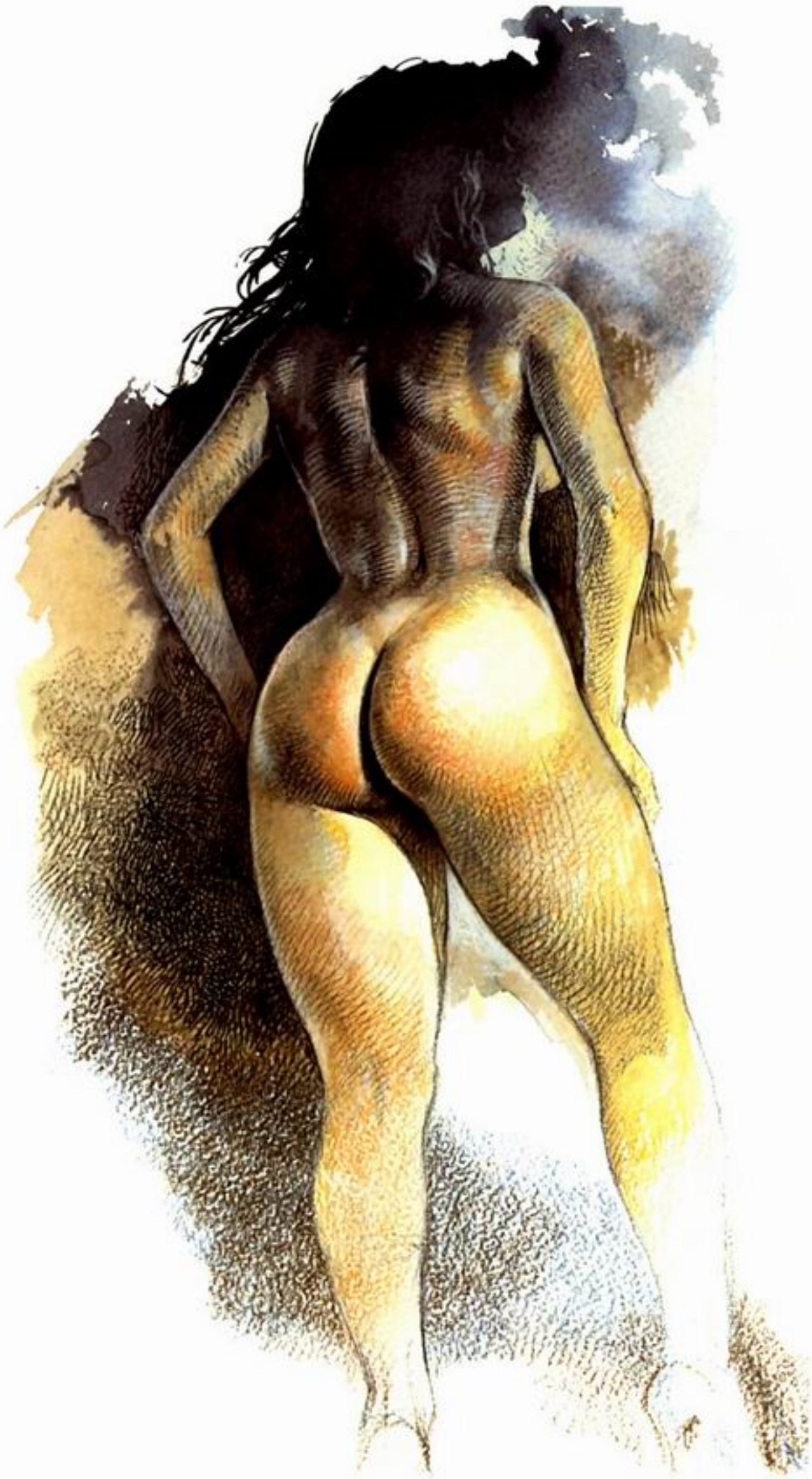
WHERE DOES TIME BEGIN?
COME... COME...

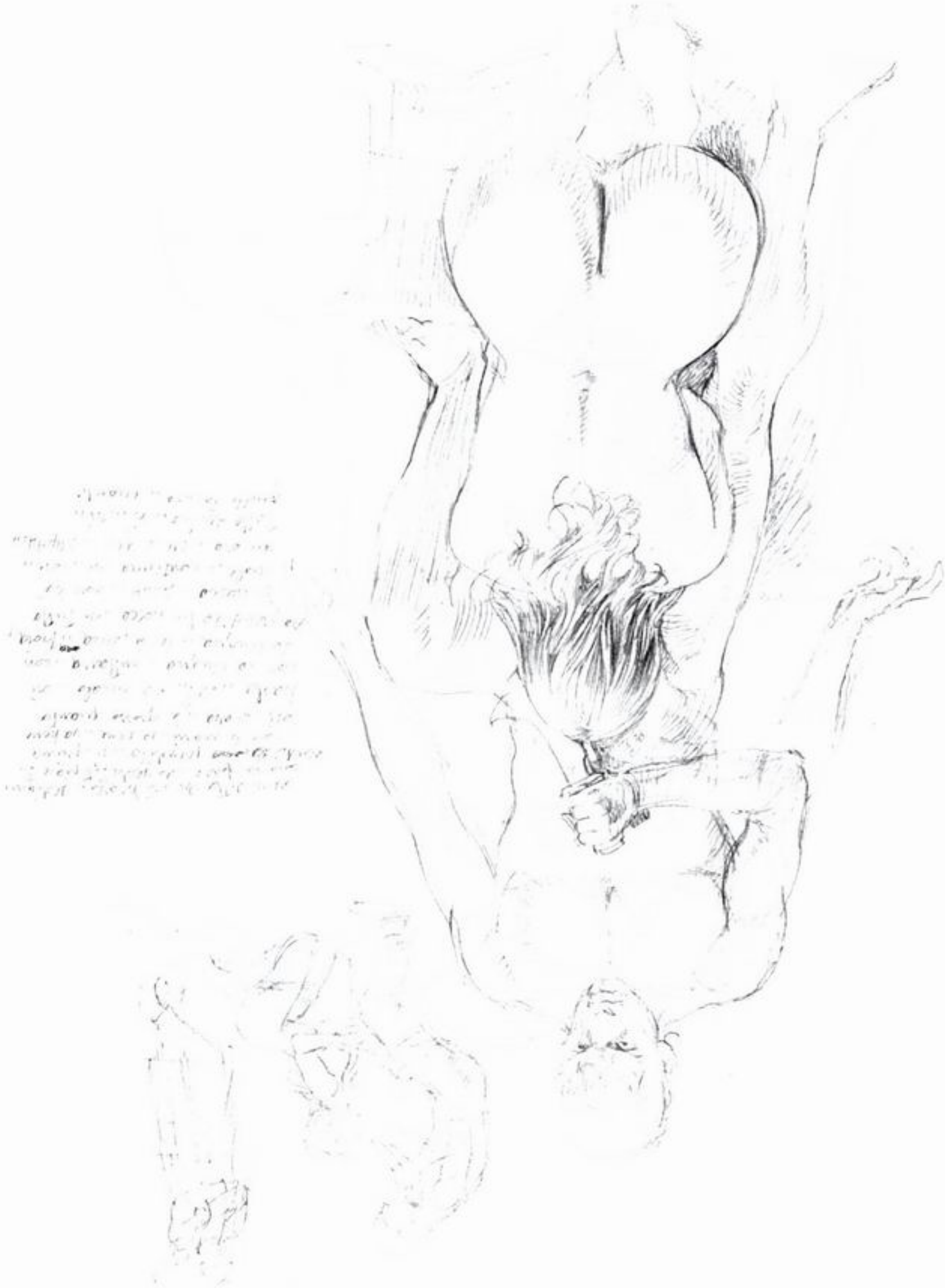


THE EXTENT OF HER CULTURE IS, however, limited by the suffocating circumstances that she encounters in the gigantic spaceship that has been abandoned and adrift for centuries, an artificial planet that she has chosen to live on. Somehow, she seems to know that Shastar has some kind of deep and terrible knowledge. She wants to know, to understand. In the first book, the mutant (the hermaphrodite), tells her that the world is a horrible place which is at the mercy of a disease that is slowly consuming it. She refuses to believe him because of her overpowering love for Shastar. We get a glimpse of this in *Morbus Gravis*...Shastar has been overcome by evil and carries this secret within him. He knows the nature of the evil that is eating away at him from the inside but cannot tell Druuna. It is a terrible responsibility because he knows that Druuna wants to know his secret.

Druuna is the kind of woman I like: slightly candid, almost naive when it comes to love. She really knows her own body and knows she can rely on it to get things done. There is a certain perversity in this candor (perversity being used here in a purely literary sense). She is not a saint. She enjoys sex and does not identify it with evil. She knows that puritanism and corruption exist in this world full of prejudices...When the priest tells her that sex is a sin, I was making a historic reference to today's world, where pleasure is always condemned or forbidden. Sex is man's primary form of pleasure but it is always kept hidden. "Sensual pleasure is evil" is a Judeo-Christian reflex and typical of the Western World.

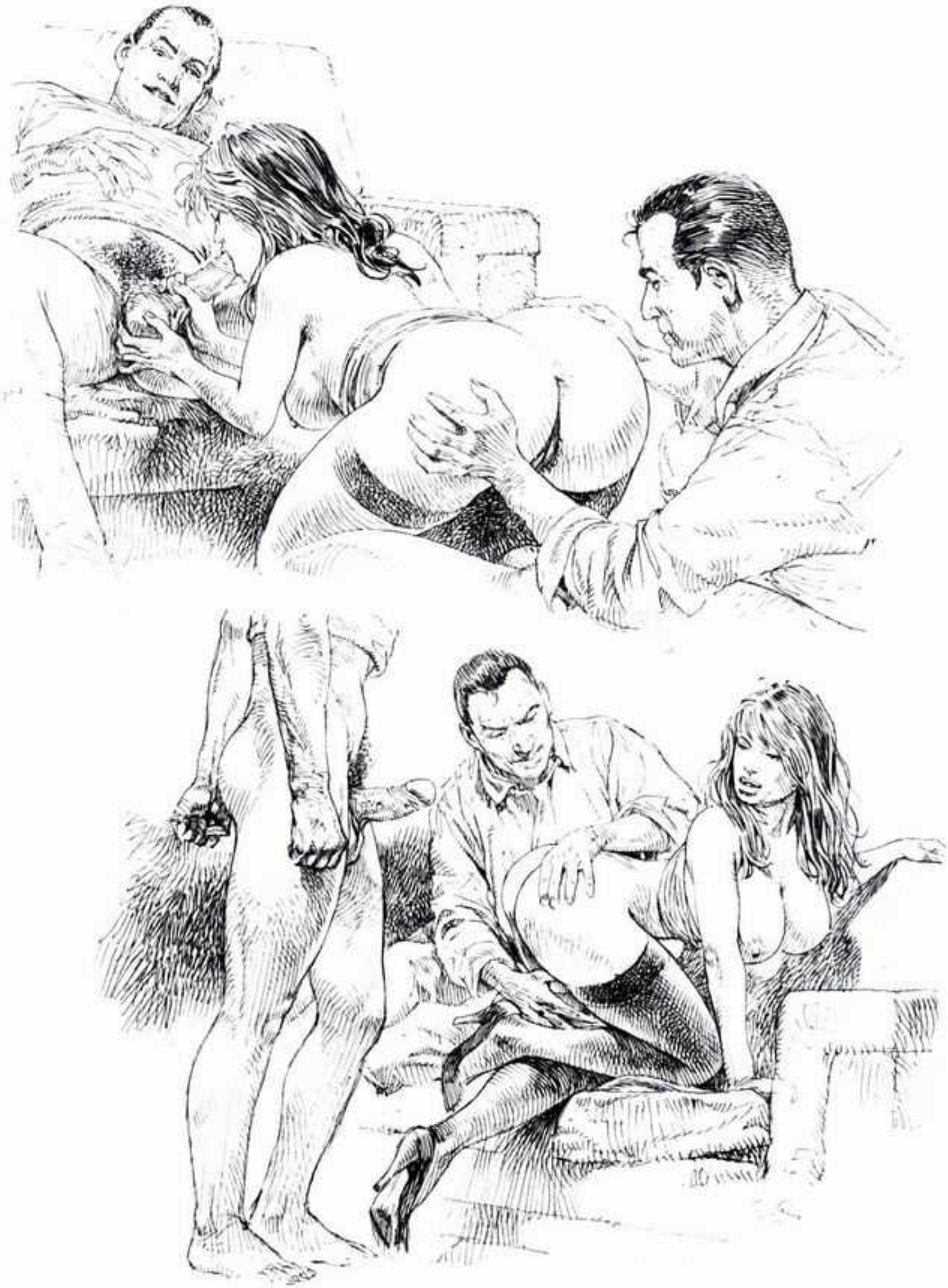
I MUST SAY THAT I LIKE TO GO AS far as I can in search of my own fantasies. I like to work that way. To maintain a certain honesty, I look deep within myself, into my fears, my anxieties, all the way to my fantasies. I think this is a leftover from the time when I used to be a painter. I used to paint what I felt. This could be considered an overly rigid attitude, but I did not want to gloss things over. As I said earlier, in the '80's I drew westerns. But I drew them the way I saw them, with the obvious compromise to the literary western stereotype: gunfights, stampedes, the perennial cowboy, all the Hollywood archetypes. Images that show up again in popular literature and finally, in comic books. With this science fiction series, I wanted to go way down into my inner self and discover my dreams, my nightmares and my hidden phobias.

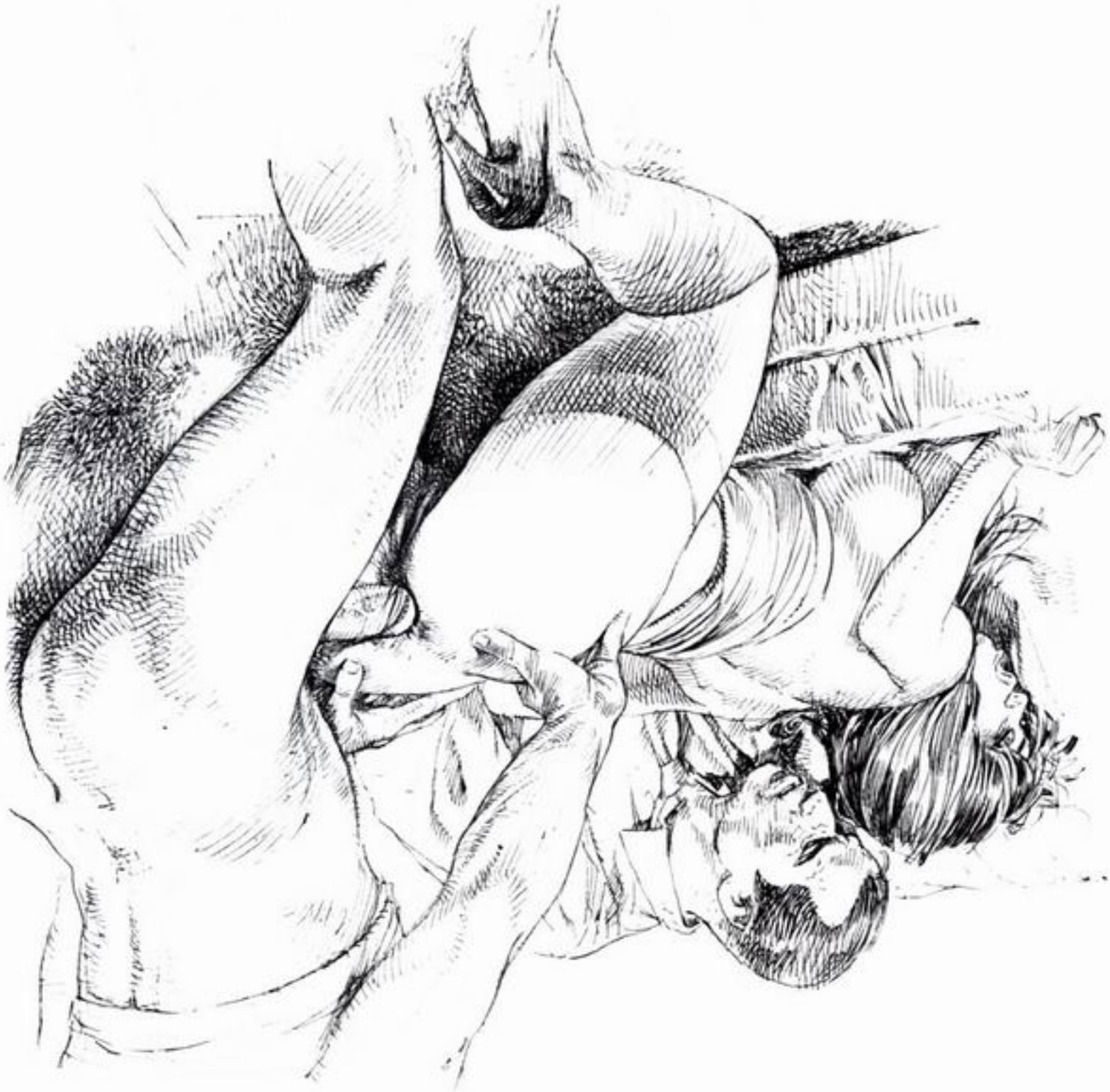




HEY...WHAT ARE YOU DOING? WHAT ABOUT YOUR FRIEND? I'M TRYING TO MAKE HIM A DRINK! WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?
YOU LOOK SO HOT IN THIS DRESS. IT'S SO TIGHT. I'VE GOT SUCH A HARD-ON...AND I LIKE IT BETTER WHEN SOMEONE'S WATCHING.
LIKE DRUUNA
BUT I HARDLY KNOW HIM! MAYBE HE WOULDN'T...
HE'S BEEN STARING AT YOUR ASS ALL NIGHT. LET HIM SEE IT. HE LIKES TO WATCH. HERE ...THAT'S BETTER. YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT I WANT.
HMMMMM!...

PULL DOWN YOUR PANTIES...SHOW HIM! SPREAD YOUR CHEEKS. THAT'S IT! HE CAN SEE YOU BETTER NOW. YOU LIKE THE FACT THAT HE'S WATCHING. DON'T YOU, BITCH? YOU LIKE IT! YOU'RE NOTHING BUT A WHORE...MY OWN LITTLE WHORE!
GOD. I LOVE IT! YOU BASTARD! YOU ALWAYS KNOW EXACTLY WHAT EXCITES ME. NO MATTER HOW INTIMATE. NO MATTER HOW PERVERSE!
LOOK...HE'S JERKING OFF LOOK AT HIM! I WANT YOU TO WATCH HIM!
...HHHHH...





COMME DRUUNA....

THE FACT IS THAT IN SOME OF MY work, the first book to be exact, you encounter one of my earliest nightmares. It had such a profound effect on me that I still remember it. Normally, I have a lot of trouble remembering my dreams. If I don't write them down as soon as I wake up, they vanish from my memory within a few minutes. However, this particular nightmare, has left an indelible mark on my mind. I can still see an enormous room, at the end of a long corridor lined with doors and opaque windows. Behind these closed doors, staircases descend into deep abysses, into strange and terrifying worlds. On the lower levels, under the large room, I can hear horrible screams. I know that all evil, pain, anxiety, and fear are born in this place, a world crawling with disgusting creatures. I find myself in a brightly lit room with other people that I know. I know I have to keep away from the stairwells. My major preoccupation is to make sure that the doors always remain closed. I am terrified that the door at the end might open. I try to do everything possible to isolate myself from this angst-ridden world.

THE STAIRCASES DESCEND END-lessly... Something we find in *Morbus Gravis*... In the book, however, I do open the door and am fascinated by what lies beyond... The fact is, I am attracted to the unknown. There is something inside me that pushes me to draw erotic images...it's beyond my control. It could be anywhere, in my studio, in a cafe; I have to think things out and put them down on paper.

I must admit that seeing my erotic work in print today does inspire a certain feeling of liberation.

I always do a lot of sketches, to be able to pick exactly the right image. I have often asked myself, "Should I draw people making love?" There are certain parts of the human body that have to be censored. If I observe two bodies having sex, if I was right next to them, I could see their organs in coitus. Apparently, this is a shocking image. Erect or not, the male organ is a total taboo. So I have to hide, cut, mask a lot of my drawings, to obscure the offending member. And in a lot of cases, this can be very difficult. I do a lot of work, little layout sketches, to get my framing just right. Sometimes I just let my-self go and take great pleasure in doing a drawing, the way it should be. Then when I redraw it into the story, I change it to meet the norms of acceptability. A strategically placed hand will often do the trick. A form of self-censorship.

I IMAGINE THAT SOME READERS MAY be shocked by the cruder sequences in my stories. I really don't have a problem with these scenes. I don't feel that sex is something that should be hidden. In our culture, pleasure is always kept under wraps. I realize that the problem exists, nurtured by Christian morality, where anything whatsoever to do with sex is forbidden. For some years now, I have been able to detach myself from that world. I have become a lot more casual about it all. The problem does exist and we can't ignore it, but I don't let myself be overwhelmed by it. When I feel like drawing something that could be considered a bit raw, I do it anyway, although I might come back and change it later. It amuses me to do that, but in no way do I modify the actual story because I shouldn't draw this or the other. I don't want to feel repressed, so I draw things even though they might just end up in my drawer. These are my favorite drawings. Sex, pleasure, and the body are all an integral part of Druuna. Without them, it would make no sense. It would be something else, another story. Someone else could draw it because it would no longer be mine. Some people might find some of it a bit gratuitous but you must bear in mind that when I draw a scene that is 'hardcore', I'm just indulging myself in a bit of personal pleasure; pleasure that I'm not supposed to take, according to some unwritten law. These images may be complaisant, but I had a lot of fun drawing them. I hope that the readers enjoy looking at them as much as I did conceiving them and that, together, we derive equal pleasure from these sensual, fascinating images.

Mostruosità – Donna è simile particolarmente nel
gigantesco sviluppo [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] non più penetrabile. Donna deve costruirsi e lasciarsi per se,
[illegible] mezzo [illegible] piacere [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

QUITE RECENTLY, A JOURNALIST asked me if the evil I refer to throughout my work was in fact a metaphor for AIDS. This could be true, since this is a problem that has been weighing on my mind. Attitudes towards AIDS have changed since 1983, although I realize that anything to do with sexual pleasure is still being condemned. For some, it has become synonymous with the illness. "If you are ill, that's 'cause you were evil. You were evil 'cause you had sex. So, you have to be punished." I am in absolute horror of this way of thinking. Being quite traumatized by this horrible illness, I wanted to describe it. Today, people are trying to understand the victims, and accept them for who they are. At the beginning of the '80's, AIDS was considered to be the ultimate horror. Victims were isolated from and abandoned by everyone. "You have sinned, you have made love, you must be a homosexual, a junkie. So, you have to be put into a ghetto... and you must die." That's the attitude I wanted to show.

In *Drama*, the policeman has been touched by evil. His four friends, his colleagues, hate him immediately. It's all his fault. They want to kill him. One of them suggests, "Let's execute him!" From that instant, he is completely rejected. Desperate, he runs away, not because of the evil he has inside him that will eventually mutate him into a monster, but because he has been abandoned by his friends. "I am no longer like them, I have to run away, they hate me, they want to kill me."

THIS ATTITUDE REALLY WORRIES me... everything is compartmentalized, here we have Good, and there, Evil. "You are sick! " Suddenly, you become someone else, a demon, a villain. "Be gone or be killed! " The Nazis used to exterminate the sick because they were of no more use. In *Mathu Gram* the monk goes a step further, the sick have to be exterminated not because they are of no use, but because they have become evil. This concept of good and evil is typical of all repressive societies. In my next book, *Mandragora*, I do evoke a glimmer of hope. I am absolutely convinced that a vaccine against the AIDS virus will be found through genetic research. A vaccine will be found, as it was found for polio and for small pox. Dr. Montagnier has already isolated the HIV virus.

I read somewhere that another French doctor, Daniel Zagury, has discovered a vaccine with which he is experimenting in a hospital in Zaire, where he works. He has inoculated volunteers among his patients and reports that the results are very satisfactory. I really believe that through genetic manipulation we will be able to replace the diseased gene by a healthy one. I have always had this awful fear of cancer, to which has been added a great fear of AIDS. The idea of mutation has always horrified me. I had an architect friend who contracted cancer of the facial bones. His face started getting more and more deformed and he closed himself up in his house, even though he could have still gone out. He excluded himself from society. He had become a mutant, a monster. He died a few years ago, but I hadn't seen him for months before that. Cellular mutation that leads to the alteration of the body really terrifies me. It is not the vampire itself that instills fear, it's the idea that human beings can transform themselves into monsters.

ALTERED STATES WAS ONE OF THE first movies to deal with the subject. At one point, the hero is looking at himself in a mirror when he starts to mutate. Slowly, his body changes until he becomes someone, something, else. That sort of thing really scares me, but at the same time completely fascinates me. I seem to be attracted by anything that upsets me.

In the first book, the computer has total control of the spaceship. In fact, it had been created to regenerate the brain of the commander, who had been preserved for centuries, with his head full of probes. The symbiosis between the computer and the commander was complete. The commander is completely dependant on the computer, which has been programmed for this specific function. The commander wants to die. His mind is a whirlpool of infinite knowledge gleaned over the centuries. His microprocessors have even captured some mysterious data. In the second book, the human being still left in him falls in love with Druuna and wants to use her to commit suicide. For him to be able to die, Druuna has to destroy the computer. But if the computer is destroyed, the spaceship will explode. He realizes that he can't succeed, and that in any case Druuna wouldn't let him. So the story continues.

As opposed to Hal, the computer in Kubrick's 2001, *A Space Odyssey*, which had nothing human about it, the one in my spaceship is in direct contact with Commander Lewis, whom he controls. All life dies aboard the titanic vessel, drained by the gigantic alien, the monster from outer space, who is responsible for the disease (this will be explained in *Mandragora*)... it slowly infiltrates everything.

IN *CARNIVORA*, LEWIS AND SHASTAR manage to break away from the artificial planet and integrate their minds with the computer on the smaller ship. Willy, Terry, Doc and Druuna are also on board.

We encountered similar situations in *Morbus Gravis* and *Druuna* where the computer could not prevent certain events from occurring.

I find that in science fiction, there are no real limits to what you can do. I have been an avid reader of this genre ever since I was a child. I devoured all the classics: Bradbury, Asimov, Anderson, Heinlein, Herbert, Simak and Zelazny, and I find I have no real preferences. When asked who my favorite author is, I have a tendency to be evasive. There are some really wonderful concepts in the earlier works of some writers whose work disappointed me later on.

I think I was most influenced by Orwell's work, and by images from movies such as *Alien*, *Blade Runner*, *Alyss*, *Terminator* and *Total Recall*. My culture comes from everything I have been able to assimilate over the years. I don't think that one can "write something original". Everything has already been said, all possible human situations have been treated, all the masterpieces have already been written. Of course, we can have variations on such themes as technological advances, the return to barbarism, space travel, or life after a nuclear holocaust.

My favorite **science fiction** theme is adventures into the unknown, as in the case of Christopher Columbus, who set out looking for a new route to India. He just set sail for a mysterious world. For an explorer at the end of the nineteenth century, immigrants going West towards the great plains had no idea what they were going to find beyond the horizon, even the local tribes had never seen a white man.

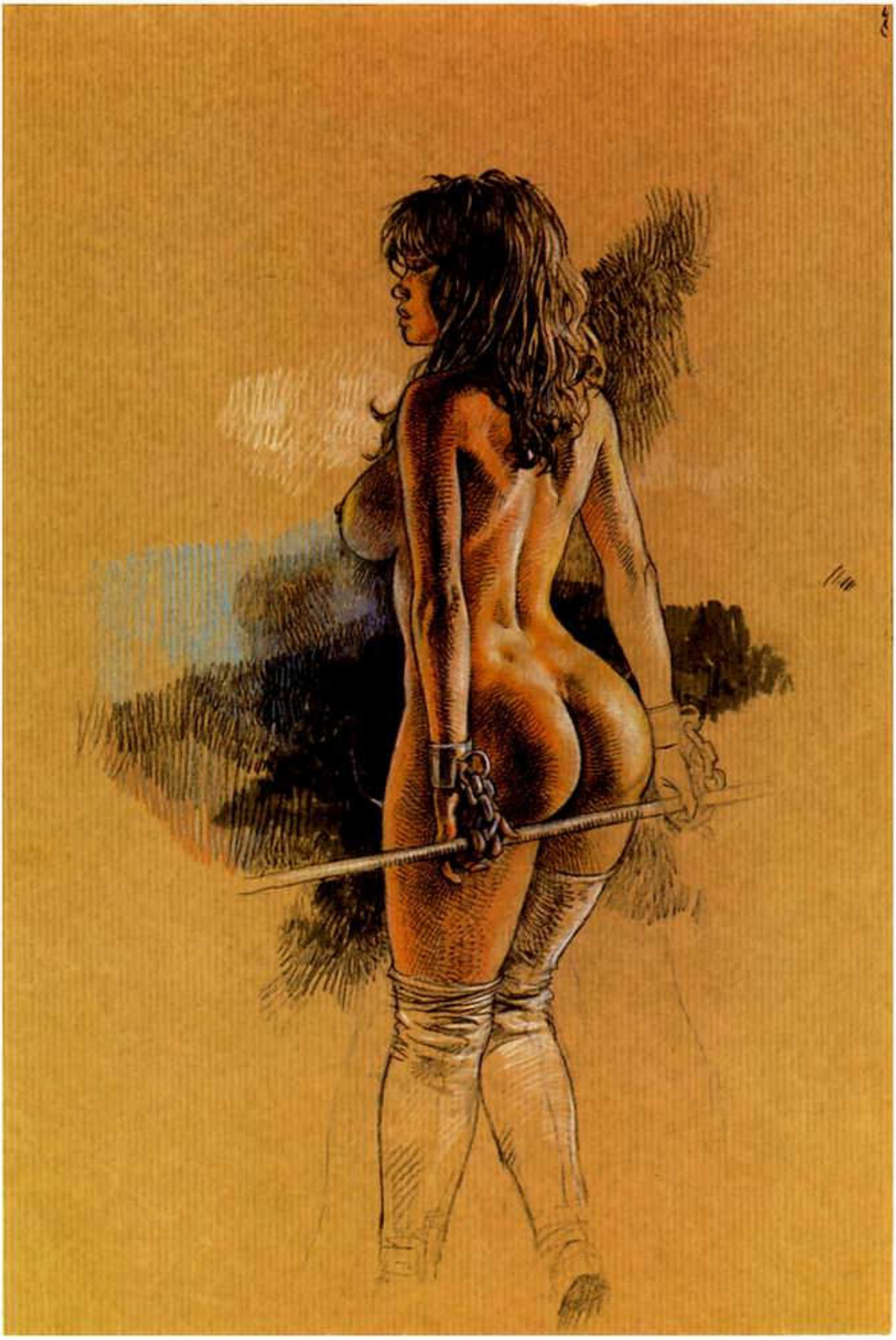
I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FASCINATED BY the mystery of space. What lies beyond infinity? In *Carnivora*, I suggested that the small spaceship had reached the end of the universe. Is there anything beyond that? There lies the mystery. Perhaps an upside-down world, where time runs backwards. I was thrilled by the idea of representing the end of the universe as an immense wall, stretching as far as the eye could see. Was it constructed by humans or by extraterrestrials? Was this the real Tower of Babel, rising into the heavens and disappearing into the clouds, towards God, or other equally mysterious beings? Man constructed the pyramids to elevate himself towards the firmament, looking for something he knew had to exist. The fascination of wanting to know what lies above and below...Below us is Hell, above us, Heaven...The ultimate unknown!

BUT COMING BACK TO women...While I'm out walking, I always look at the women that I pass. Most of the time, I turn round to see what they look like from the back. I try not to make it too obvious because it's not very polite! And when I catch myself doing it, I'm always quite embarrassed.

A woman's face is, of course, her most important feature. But I am really obsessed with seeing women from the back. To me, it's absolutely necessary. I look for prominent butts. I hate it when they're small and flat. I don't consider small-assed women beautiful, although they may be very pleasant company!

I often draw Druuna viewed from the back; this is to give the impression that she' s going towards a world that is coming at her. This has to be, without a doubt, the most sensual representation of a woman. A woman is really naked when you see her in **three-quarter** profile. Viewed from the front, you can see her breasts, her belly and her pubis, but something seems to be missing. But when she is viewed in three-quarter profile, from the back, with her eyes tilted towards you, it's as if she were inviting carnal contact. It' s almost fetishistic... I feel that the form of a beautiful butt is very positive: like life, like a smile. I have a sincere admiration for that kind of beauty in a woman. And in my experience, these women are kinder, gentler, more positive and more affectionate.

Paolo Eleuteri Serpieri



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